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safety tips for
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SAFETY TIPS FOR WINTER STORMS

Winter storms in the form of blizzards, heavy snows, ice storms, freezing rain, or sleet can be a serious hazard to people in many parts of the country. The first line of protection is to KEEP POSTED ON WEATHER CONDITIONS in the surrounding area through television, radio, and newspapers.

FORECASTS AND WARNINGS

A few hours of warning of a storm can be the key to avoiding being caught in it, or at least to be better prepared to cope with it. To take full advantage of weather forecasts and warnings, learn and understand terms commonly used:

● A *heavy snow warning* usually means an expected snowfall of 4 inches or more in a 12-hour period, or 6 inches or more in a 24-hour period. Warnings of *snow flurries, snow squalls,* or *blowing and drifting* snow are important mainly because visibility may be reduced and roads may become slippery or blocked.

● A *blizzard* is the most dangerous of all winter storms. It combines cold air, heavy snow, and strong winds that blow the snow about and may reduce visibility to only a few yards. A *blizzard warning* is issued when the Weather Service expects considerable snow and winds of 35 miles per hour or more. A *severe blizzard warning* means that a very heavy snowfall is expected, with winds of at least 45 miles an hour and temperatures of 10 degrees or lower.

● *Freezing rain or freezing drizzle* is forecast when expected rain is likely to freeze as soon as it strikes the ground, putting a coating of ice or glaze on roads and everything else that is exposed. If a substantial layer of ice is expected to accumulate from the freezing rain, an *ice storm* is forecast.

● Sleet is small particles of ice, usually mixed with rain. If enough sleet accumulates on the ground, it will make the roads slippery.

ISOLATION

BE PREPARED FOR ISOLATION AT HOME. If you live in a rural area, make sure you could survive at home for a week or two in case a storm isolated you and made it impossible for you to leave. You should:

● Keep an adequate supply of heating fuel on hand and use it sparingly. Your regular supplies may be curtailed by storm conditions. If necessary, conserve fuel by keeping the house cooler than usual, or by "closing off" some rooms temporarily. Also have available some kind of *emergency* heating equipment and fuel so you could keep at least one room of your house warm enough to be livable. This could be a camp stove with fuel, or a supply of wood or coal if you have a fireplace. If your furnace is controlled by a thermostat and your electricity is cut off by a storm, the furnace probably would not operate and you would need emergency heat.

● Stock an emergency supply of food and water, as well as emergency cooking equipment such as a camp stove. Some of this food should be of the type that does not require refrigeration or cooking.

● Make sure you have a battery-powered radio and extra batteries on hand, so that if your electric power is cut off you could still hear weather forecasts, information, and advice broadcast by local authorities. Also, flashlights or lanterns would be needed.

● Keep on hand the simple tools and equipment needed to fight a fire. Also, be certain that all family members know how to take precautions that would prevent fire at such a time, when the help of the fire department may not be available.

CAUTION: Know how to use your emergency heating and lighting equipment safely to prevent fire or dangerous fumes. Use only safety listed equipment. Never introduce a fuel into a unit not designed for that fuel. Proper ventilation is essential. Burning charcoal gives off deadly amounts of carbon monoxide.

TRAVEL

TRAVEL ONLY IF NECESSARY. Avoid all unnecessary trips. If you must travel, use public transportation if possible. However, if you are forced to use your automobile for a trip of any distance, take these precautions.

- Make sure your car is in good condition, properly serviced, and equipped with chains or snow tires.
- Take another person with you if possible.
- Maintain a full tank of gas.

- Have emergency "winter storm supplies" in the car, such as a container of sand, shovel, windshield scraper, tow chain, or rope, flashlight, and blankets or sleeping bags. It also is good to have with you heavy gloves or mittens, overshoes, extra woolen socks, and winter headgear to cover your head and face.
- Travel by daylight and use major highways if you can. Keep the car radio turned on for weather information and advice.
- Drive with all possible caution. Don't try to save time by traveling faster than road and weather conditions permit.
- Don't be daring or foolhardy. Stop, turn back, or seek help if conditions threaten that may test your ability or endurance, rather than risk being stalled, lost, or isolated. If you are caught in a *blizzard,* seek refuge immediately.

KEEP CALM IF YOU GET IN TROUBLE. If your car breaks down during a storm, or if you become stalled or lost, don't panic. Think the problem through, decide what's the safest and best thing to do, and then do it slowly and carefully. If you are on a well-traveled road, show a trouble signal. Set your directional lights to flashing, raise the hood of your car, or hang a cloth from the radio aerial or a car window. Then stay in your car and wait for help to arrive. If you run the engine to keep warm, remember to open a window enough to provide ventilation and protect you from carbon monoxide poisoning.

Wherever you are, if there is no house or other source of help in sight, do not leave your car to search for assistance, as you may become confused and get lost.

OVEREXERTION

AVOID OVEREXERTION. Every winter many unnecessary deaths occur because people – especially older persons, but younger ones as well – engage in more strenuous physical activity than their bodies can stand. Cold weather itself, *without* any physical exertion, puts an extra strain on your heart. If you add to this physical exercise, especially exercise that you are not accustomed to – such as shoveling snow, pushing an automobile, or even walking fast or far – you are risking a heart attack, a stroke, or damage to your body. In winter weather, and especially in winter storms, be aware of this danger, and avoid overexertion.

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